

Uproar at Ephesus.

Acts 19:23-34.

Sunday, August 7, 2011.

I. The timing of this uproar.

“And about that time there arose a great commotion about the way.”

Three events mark the close of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus, and the nature and timing of the latter two is defined by the first.

- A. The first and defining event is the great revival that came as a result of people desiring to be rightly related to the Lord Jesus Christ.
1. They saw first hand that they were no match for the powers of darkness on their own. The seven sons of Sceva proved that to them as one demon possessed man easily overpowered them.
 2. They also saw first hand that the powers of darkness were no match for the Lord Jesus Christ, for sickness and demons fled before Him and His servants, and even before the handkerchiefs and aprons of His servants as vs. 11, 12 make clear.
 3. As a result they distanced themselves from the powers and influences of darkness, seeking to cling to the lord Jesus Christ alone.
 4. As tangible proof of this change of heart they brought and burned all their books about Jewish superstitions and magical arts.
 5. The result of this drawing near to God was, as it always is, that God also drew near to them, and that the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed in and through them.
 6. The influence of this revival would spread far and wide.
 - We have seen already in vs. 10 that Luke mentions how the gospel spread from Ephesus throughout all Asia.
 - In Revelation 2 and 3 we read about the seven churches in Asia; all are centered in, and around Ephesus.
 - In the passage before us we have more evidence of the widespread influence of the gospel throughout the Roman province of Asia. Demetrius, a silversmith in Ephesus, who made his profits by selling silver images of the goddess Diana and her temple; this Demetrius mentions how Paul’s message has turned away many people from worshipping Diana throughout almost all of the province of Asia.
- B. The second event is linked to the first, and is introduced to us by the words: “When these things were accomplished...” in vs. 21.
1. From the great work of the Spirit of God among the Ephesians in would seem that Paul could leave the work safely in their hands, and move on to other cities.
 2. Naturally he contemplates the question “What now, and where now, and what lies ahead?” Paul’s spirit is joined to the Holy Spirit, and looks to Him in humble dependence and submission. Paul discerns with the Spirit’s help the vast panorama of his future ministry, stretching from Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem, and beyond that to Rome, and encompassing what would be at least the next four years.

- C. The third event is the great uproar in Ephesus.
1. It is linked to the great revival of Ephesus by the words: “And about that time...” That is the time of the great Ephesian revival.
 2. It shows us that the enemy of all the Lord’s grace and goodness is never far behind. He does not take the destruction of his kingdom lying down, and he mounts what amounts to a counter offensive, seeking to revive paganism.

II. The making of this uproar.

How did the enemy of all grace and goodness cause the Ephesian people to rise up against the gospel, and to re-affirm their allegiance to the powers of darkness?

The way into the hearts of the Ephesian people was not a difficult one. As it turns out there were two ways, and both gates stood wide open for the old tyrant.

- A. The first was the pathway or gate of covetousness, greed, or the lust of the eyes.
1. To that end he employed Demitrius and the guild of the silversmiths.
 2. Ephesus was home to the temple of Diana and the statue that had fallen out of heaven (perhaps a meteorite). The temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, measuring 220 x 425 feet, and resting on 127, 60ft tall pillars. People came from far and wide to admire this structure.
 3. Terracotta images of both the temple and her goddess have been found all over the Mediterranean world. For the more well to do there were the silver images. Both brought great profit to the craftsmen who made them.
 4. Demitrius, his sales diminish as a result of the gospel, calls his guild of craftsmen together to counter the gospel’s influence and to exalt the greatness of Diana and her temple.
- B. The second was the pathway or gate of civic pride or the pride of life. Vs. 27
1. What defined the city of Ephesus was the Diana cult; her statue and temple were a matter of great civic pride for the Ephesians. It defined their city; it was what they were about.
 2. Now the gospel comes and undermines all that; it changed the very essence of what Ephesus was all about, and there were many who wanted to preserve the Ephesus they knew; hence their rallying around Diana.

III. Lessons from this uproar.

- A. The way the evil one made the Ephesian people serviceable to his ends was by having them value the wrong things; by having them think that their personal prosperity and civic pride were matters of supreme importance.
- B. The evil one works the same way still. For that reason you must guard the ways to your heart by taking counter measures.
1. Identify what is important and of value in life; what is worth living for. This is the Lord Jesus Christ and that which is of supreme importance to Him, the wellbeing of His people. Transfer the love of your heart from things, to the Lord and His people, because they alone are worth it. 1 John 2:15,16; 5:21.
 2. Guard the gate of the pride of life with the grace of humility. Have an eye for your own many shortcomings; an eye for the work of grace in the lives of others; the worthiness of others vs. yourself; a willingness to empty yourself for their wellbeing. “They are worth it vs. I am worth it.”